

## IN MEMORIAM



# Sr. Mary Melitta Barga

BORN: March 1918

ENTERED CONGREGATION: August 30, 1934

DIED: November 22, 2010

**W**ELCOME to our celebration of the Resurrection liturgy of Sister Melitta. Joining our Precious Blood community is her brother, James, and other relatives, friends and co-workers. Her sisters, Rosemary [Nisonger] and Eileen [Barrett], are with us in spirit as distance hinders them from joining us in person.

Norma Barga was the third child in a family of five girls, followed by two boys. Leo and Matilda Stammen Barga welcomed Norma to their home in North Star, Ohio, in March 1918. Life in the Barga household was rooted in reverence for God and family prayer. Childhood memories reflect a spirit of shared work on their farm with regular rewards of visits to the county fair, movies, ice skating and sled riding to mention a few.

At the end of Norma's seventh grade her grandmother died, and she was asked by her grandfather to stay with him and her uncle and keep house. This she generously did with the approval of her parents.

After Norma's second year of high school, Father Cortain [the parish priest at St. Louis Parish in North Star] approached her and told her he was going to take her to visit the convent. Melitta wrote later that her "only concept of a convent was talking through a curtain and sleeping on a board." However, on

Ascension Thursday in 1934 Norma, her mother, Father Cortain and the parish housekeeper visited the Sisters of the Precious Blood. Sister Domina [Stadler] greeted them warmly at the door and invited them to stay for lunch. Later that same afternoon Sister Teresita [Berting] made arrangements for Norma to become a postulant the next August. Norma finished her last two years of high school and her preparations for religious life in the convent. Her first vows were made on Aug. 15, 1937, and she received the name Sister Mary Melitta. This was a doubly special day for Melitta because her sister, Vivian [later Sister M. Hubertine], joined the CPPS family on the very same day. Later her brother, Bernard, would join the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

Sister Melitta's first two years after profession were spent getting her teacher's certificate from the Athenaeum of Ohio while living at Regina High School. For the next 53 years, Melitta ministered as a teacher in Ohio at St. Mary's in Dayton; St. Anthony, Columbus Grove; Queen of Peace, Millville; and in the public schools of Fort Recovery, Glandorf and Minster. She also taught at Saint Barnabas in Alameda, Calif., and Saint John the Evangelist in Loveland, Colo.

In the mid '90s, Sister Melitta claimed to be retired, but for her it was simply moving to another type of ministry, first at Twin Towers [low-income apartment living for seniors in Dayton] and then here at Salem Heights. She

found new ways to use her teaching skills as a tutor and guide to GED students. She volunteered for bingo, gardening, lunch room assistance, taking trays to the infirm, as well as engaging in and supporting many and various justice issues. No task was too menial for her. Melitta's energy was overflowing and dispensed most generously and always in a spirit of joy.

Melitta's greatest joy was bringing the Blessed Sacrament to those not able to attend Mass. She herself was deeply in love with God. Attending daily liturgy and praying her night hour of adoration were sacred to her as was daily community prayer.

On occasions it was very hard for Melitta to accept the reality of diminishment. She would say, "I have done it that way for 92 years. Why do I need to change?" With a few minutes of recalling to her that 92 years is a long time for things to be functioning so well, reality came to the fore and she would say, "God is calling me to a new kind of life."

On the day Melitta died, the psalm response for the Mass of the day read: "This is the people that longs to see your face." Indeed Melitta, you no longer need to long to see God's face — you are there now. And you got to this heavenly home in true Melitta style, no dallying around on this earth! Now you can enjoy with utter amazement the beauty of the face of God!

—Sister Madonna Ratermann